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THE SOUTHERN CHURCH AND THE NEGRO.

FOR African slavery in the United States, from the beginning of it to the end of it, the only people in this country not in any way responsible for it were the slaves themselves. They were in America without their seeking, and in slavery against their will. As a class they took as little part in their emancipation as they did in their enslavement. No people in slavery ever bore themselves more patiently, as no people, during a great war that involved their freedom, ever behaved more magnanimously. It is also true that no people, while in slavery and by its tuition, ever made such advances from savagery toward civilization.

Slavery came to its death by the will of God as surely as it was overruled by Providence to bring many and priceless blessings to the slaves themselves. He is a poor student of the ways of God with men who, in his abhorrence of any of the ways of men, closes his eyes to the facts of Providential history. Dr. Mayo, of Boston, in an address at Ocean Grove, New Jersey, in 1883, stated a great and indisputable fact when he said that although, under the old regime, the slaves were shut out from the opportunities of book learning, "American slavery, itself, was perhaps the most effective university through which any race of savages was ever introduced into civilization."

During slavery and through slavery the Negroes in America made more progress in the arts and training of Christian civilization than all their ancestors ever made; than all their kindred in Africa have made. They learned how to make crops and, on the side of material life, this is the first step out of barbarism. They learned the English language well enough to receive, while in slavery, many of the best lessons Christian people could teach them and to begin their education in books the day they were made free. On this foundation has been laid the educational work among these people since 1865. What they learned before 1865 made it possible for the facts of 1889 to exist: in 1889 two millions of them can at least read the word of God, and more than one million of them are at school.

While in slavery the Negro learned much in many directions. While not ready for citizenship, when its perils and responsibilities were suddenly laid upon him, he had, while a slave, learned more of law and civil order than all the Negroes in Africa know, and it was what he had learned that made his citizenship, when he emerged from slavery, possible to him or at all possible to others. Best of all things, he had learned much of the Christian religion. In 1865 a half million of them were in the communion of the Christian Churches of the South; all of them knew much of Christianity and all of them were, to a degree, under its benign influence.

These statements are not made in defense of slavery—in a world that belongs to Jesus Christ slavery is not defensible—but in recognition of unmistakable facts that can not be ignored, if we would reach any rational and Christian conclusions concerning these strange people whose fortunes are inextricably joined with the fortunes of the white people of this country.

Seeing that the most important fact in the history of the African people in this country has been the Christianizing of hundreds of thousands of them, no Christian thinker can doubt that Christianizing them was God's design in their coming to this country. It is equally clear as to the duty of Christian people concerning the Negro race in our midst—whether we think of to-day or to-morrow—that we must determine all things from the Christian stand-point. Economic, political, and social questions necessarily grow out of the facts of this problem, but its true solution is forever and utterly impossible except upon the platform of the gospel of the Son of God. It pleased God to select the Southern rather than the Northern States of the Union as the chosen field for working out this stupendous race problem that involves the destiny of two continents. The divine election did not turn upon accident; it was determined in unfailing wisdom. This burden God laid upon the Southern people because they were fittest to bear it and perform the duties that grew out of their relations to the Negro race. Thousands of them failed in their duty to God and to their lowly brother, but thousands of them did not fail. They did better than any other people in their case would have done; else the problem committed to them would have been laid upon others who, in God's prevision, would have done better with it.

Some reasons that entered into the selection of the South and of its people, as best suited to forward the stupendous schemes of Providence, seem very plain; others, equally important, we may never know. For one thing, these African children in the school of Providence needed a warm but not an enervating climate. That the Southern States suited the physical conditions of the problem is evidenced in the improved breed of men of African descent that exists among us to-day. Neither in climate nor other conditions were the New England or other Northern States adapted to his physical or other wants. The Negroes in this preparatory school, through which Providence conducted them, needed the protection and guidance of a stronger people, devoted chiefly to agriculture, and yet of a people who would be patient with their pupils. To whatever it may be attributed it is certain that the white people of the South, both before and since 1865, in their personal relations with Negroes are more patient with them than any other white people who have ever had dealings with them. It is a matter of moment, in the consideration of this question, that this stronger race—outside of Louisiana where slavery was at its worst—was homogeneous in blood and Protestant in religion. Many failures in duty and many grievous wrongs history justly writes against the master class. None of these will a candid man seek to defend or explain away. But it will help candid people, who were not chosen to bear this burden, to judge the South fairly to consider a few things that many seem never to have known. 1. The Southern people did better for their slaves than any other people ever did for slaves. The history that tells of slavery in New England will not furnish contradiction to this statement. 2. Southern masters are not alone in dealing hardly with dependents. This does not excuse any who failed or sinned, but it suggests a reason why those who would cast the stones of judgment should consider our Lord's words to those who were eager to punish the young girl taken in sin. 3. This also is true; wherein any have sinned all have suffered. For every wrong done to defenseless slaves the whole race of masters paid a penalty, of which the loss in money values is so small a part that it is not worth considering.

How God overruled slavery and brought out of it great blessings to the African people under its yoke, is illustrated in the marvelous progress of these people since slavery came to its death

On the foundations laid before 1865 Christian philanthropy and enlightened public policy have built a work absolutely matchless in history. When the Revolution, so far as actual war is concerned, ended at Appomattox, nearly five millions who had been slaves were made free in law and in fact. Presently they were citizens and voters. No people ever confronted a greater or more imminent peril. Whether the trial of what virtues may exist in human nature was harder in its pressure upon the late masters or the late slaves God only knows. Nothing in the previous habits or education of either class prepared them for the new conditions that came in a day. One class did not know the rights, the other did not know the duties, of free labor. And herein is the explanation of most of the troubles and irritations that have vexed the South so long.

The Southern white people, who for generations had been the only teachers the Negroes had ever had, were, for the time at least, disqualified for carrying on their education under the new conditions that came with the emancipation of both races from slavery. They were broken in fortune and could not establish and conduct colleges and training schools for the Negroes—they could not then educate their own children. They were disqualified also by the results in them—in their habits, thoughts, and sentiments—of their relations to the Negroes both as slaves and freedmen. These personal disqualifications were natural to their position; it could not have been otherwise. It can not be proved that any other people, similarly placed, would have thought and felt otherwise than the Southern white people thought and felt, for no other people were ever similarly placed. Whether, as to all these difficult matters, the Southern people have labored well or ill, this is certain: there is nothing in history to furnish a basis of comparison. This history stands alone. If there were to be colleges and other higher schools for Negro youth for some years after emancipation, it is certain that other than Southern white people had to establish them. Southern white people could not had they been minded to do it; had they been able they would not have done it.

The Northern people came out of the war richer than they entered it. For this Southern people, white and black, should give thanks; had the North in 1865 been as poor as the South was,

the end would have come. In the mercy of God toward these five million of poor negroes and to their white neighbors as well (for the right education of the black man in the South is nearly as important to the white man as to his dark brother) the people who had money had inclination. Zeal and cash for once came together.

Having studied this subject for many years, and with opportunities to know the facts beyond what most people have had, I wish to say, Never in the history of Christian benevolence and Christian endeavor was a great and emergent duty more nobly met than was the duty of trying to prepare the freedmen for freedom met by Christian men and women of the Northern States.

The most ardent eulogist of the good men and women who gave themselves with heroic abandon and Christian consecration to this wide and hard field of missionary service will, if he knows the facts and is of candid temper, admit that among them were not a few who were unfitted for a work as delicate as it was difficult. Among the wise were "cranks;" among the unselfish were some who had private ends to serve; among the zealous some who were "busy-bodies" in matters that did not concern their mission. These "difficult people" did unspeakable harm to the cause they unwisely and unworthily championed. Concerning these matters I do not guess; I have had observation and personal knowledge. But it should surprise no student of Christian history; it has always been so. Good people have always suffered misjudgments because bad people have professed adherence to their cause; wise people have been confounded because foolish people brought reproach upon them. But it would be as just to hold St. Paul responsible for Simon Magus as to charge upon the wise and good men and women who came out of Christian homes in the North to teach in Negro schools, the follies and sins of those unworthy ones who should never have entered this field at all.

The flippant sneer of certain ill-informed or very wicked Southern people that these teachers came South because they could get no employment North; that the small pay they have received measures the motive of their zeal, is as base and unjust a slander as was ever invented by malignant prejudice since slander was first used against the good and pure. It were as just to denounce citizenship because some men sell their votes; to throw foreign missions overboard because an occasional lunatic or impostor is em-

ployed by a mistaken Board of Managers; to repudiate gold because there are counterfeits; to forsake the Church of God because some hypocrites have made "gain of godliness."

Hundreds of the men and women engaged in the work of teaching Negro colleges and other training schools it has been my privilege to know, to honor, and to love. The foremost colleges and universities and Churches in the North have their representatives in this work. Nobler people than many of them I have never known; of better people I have never read. Those who scorn them can have but one excuse—ignorance. But where there has been opportunity to know the truth, ignorance is not an excuse one will stand by in the presence of the King.

The history of this work of educating the emancipated people once more and in a very noble way illustrates that saying of our Lord, "Wisdom is justified of her children." The work of the past twenty-three years has been costly—in money, the least, and in lives, the highest of all values. Millions of dollars have gone into the work of the colleges and other great training schools, and several thousands of precious lives whose worth can not be estimated by any measures of value known to this world. But the good done is worth more than it all cost—all the money, all the hard work, all the isolation and ostracism and pain of heart. Many of these good men and women have entered deeply into the fellowship of His sufferings, of whom the prophet says, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

The great facts that lie on the surface and that can be put into figures challenge not only respect, but wonder. If it be true that no poor and destitute people ever received so much help in any twenty-three years, it is also true that no illiterate people ever made so great progress in learning in the same period.

This vast educational work is distinctively Christian. The great schools are conducted by Christian men and women; in all of them the Bible holds the place of honor. In all of them the aim is to build up men and women in the virtues that constitute Christian character. Revivals of religion are as common and as thorough in these Negro colleges as in any Christian colleges for white youth in any Christian country.

The work shows for itself; it has been well done; the fruit of this tree is good. The best and most useful members of the African

race in the Southern States are the men and women who have had Christian education in these schools. In them are not only the best progressive forces at work among these people, but also the best conservative influences. In these men and women we have the best guarantee of the advancement of the African race in our country and the best assurance of social and civil order that they can give.

The school work done by these Northern missionaries is by no means the only work that they have done. They have done nearly all the evangelistic work that white people have done among the Negroes since 1865. The Southern Churches did a good, great, and abiding work under the old conditions. The Northern Churches have done nearly all since the new conditions obtained that the Negroes have not done for themselves. This is also true: Those Negroes who have done the best work in teaching and preaching among their own people have been trained and made what they are in the institutions conducted by white men and women from the North. Nearly all the money and nearly all the personal service has been Northern.

But has the Southern Church no duty to perform, no work to do for these millions of black people, not in Africa, speaking languages unknown to us, but here in our midst, brought up with us, speaking our own English tongue, our neighbors, our fellow-citizens, and our brothers? More and more this question presses itself upon us. We can not put it away; every day it will come back to us till we answer it aright—answer it as Jesus Christ would have us answer.

It is a great and singular mistake of many excellent Northern people, when they conclude that Southern white people have done next to nothing for the education of the Negro. The Southern white people, so far as the payment of money goes, have done far more than all outsiders together. It is a misfortune that many Northern people, with the best intentions it may be, but with a very misleading preconception, reach their conclusions on this subject by a process of logic rather than by an investigation of facts. If there were no figures upon the subject the conclusion is upon the surface that the Southern white people have borne and are now bearing and will continue to bear the chief burden of educating the Negro race in the Southern States. The proof is

easy and complete; it costs vastly more to maintain the sixteen thousand public schools, attended by more than one million Negro children than to conduct the colleges and universities in which their teachers are trained. That the white people pay nearly all the taxes is conceded; one of the best statisticians estimates that the white people of the South pay ninety-one dollars out of every hundred dollars of the taxes.

Take two illustrations where each Southern State might testify. From 1871 to 1888, Virginia expended \$3,709,500 upon public schools for Negro youth; upon normal and collegiate institutions, for the higher education of Negroes, \$247,000. During the same period, Alabama expended on public schools for Negro youth, \$3,296,793.24; upon normal schools for the Negroes, \$107,500. Similar statements might be made for other Southern States; these are used here simply because the reports for Virginia and Alabama were on my desk when this article was being written. All the Churches and societies have not expended such sums, or any thing like such sums, in Virginia and Alabama. They could not; only government could expend such sums in the education of the masses. These States, and the other Southern States, would have used true economy and would have observed sound public policy had they spent a great deal more than they have invested in the education of the people, but just history will say that they have done more in preparing the Negro for citizenship than all the world has done.

But the work done by the State school systems and, therefore, by the people, whose money supports them, can not put out of discussion the question before us: "What is the duty of the Southern Church to the Negro citizen, neighbor, and brother?" Christian people must consider this question, not to find a philosophy of it, or to vindicate a theory of it, but to ascertain a duty and to find the best way for discharging it. If other people were able and willing to do all for the Christian elevation of the Negro that he needs; if other people were actually to do these necessary things, Southern Christians would not thereby be exempt from duties of their own. Duties grow out of relations and opportunities. If a hungry man be near me, my duty is not performed when another afar off feeds him. In such a case, if the hungry man needs nothing from me I need something from him. It is ruin to me to

dehumanize myself in failing to relieve the hunger at my door. It ought to be true that Southern white people can better than any other white people help the Negro to become what he ought to be. If this be true, we are under an obligation that no sort of reasoning can explain away, and that no sort of prejudice can weaken.

It is a common belief among Southern people that they understand the Negro and his peculiarities more perfectly than any other people can understand him. Indeed, not a few Southern white people think that they know the Negro better than he knows himself. This may be so; self-knowledge is not more readily acquired by a whole race than by an individual member of it. The Southern white people should understand the Negro better than other people; their opportunity for knowing him has been best. On one point my observation leads me to doubt; it is not clear to me that the average Southern white man knows the free Negro—especially the educated Negro—as well as he knew him as a slave. But it is certain that the Southern white man's knowledge of the Negro is good enough to lay upon him an obligation he can not escape—that, if he have the Spirit of Christ in him, he will not desire to escape—an obligation to help the Negro to become in fact as well as in law a Christian citizen and a Christian man of as high order as his gifts and opportunities allow. It is clear to the common sense of the case that Southern white Christians can, if they will, do much good to the Negro that no others can do. But if it were otherwise, they must do part of this work. If it be "more blessed to give than to receive," the Southern white people can not afford to stand idly by and see others do their work for them. It may be that we need the good that would come to us from helping the Negro more than the Negro needs what we can do for him.

I do not wish at this time to make the argument on a lower plane than that of Christian duty; but it is well worth the attention of the wise whether the let-alone policy is sound public policy for the Southern people. If we have views of government and civil order that are good; if we have ways of living that are commendable; if we have sentiments that are worthy, is it wise in us to leave the training of the future leaders of the Negro race in our midst to other people, with other views and ways and sentiments?

Concluding this article, I suggest the most important and alto-

gether helpful things that Southern white Christians can at this time do for the cause of the Christian uplifting of the Negro race:

1. By every token the first duty we owe the Negro is to study his case with absolute fairness. If his education be the special topic under consideration, find out the facts. They are accessible, and good people who are wise will not ignore them.

2. The second duty most important at this time; the thing that will be most helpful, next to finding out the facts, is simply this: To treat courteously, kindly, and justly the good men and women who are trying to do for the Negro what we have not done—educate him. This we can all do; this we will do if we walk in the light that Jesus Christ has given to us. If we do as he would do in our place, and, therefore, as he would have us do, this much, and it is a very great deal, we can do to help the cause of the Christian education of the Negro; we can forever have done with the social ostracism of God's servants who are teaching the ignorant how to read—who are training the untrained to be Christian men and women.

When we study the case, when we know the facts, and deal in a Christian spirit by those who are working to do the Negro good, then we will be ready to begin work ourselves.

ATTICUS G. HAYGOOD.



